DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 105 920 JC 750 313

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TITLE A Need for Articulation: Sponsored Experiential Learning--El Paso Community Based Agencies and El Paso Community College.
PUB DATE 27 Apr 75
NOTE 23p.; Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Program); Communication Problems; *Community Agencies (Public); Community Colleges; Cooperative Programs; *Field Experience Programs; *Junior Colleges; Practicums; Questionnaires; *School Community Cooperation; School Community Programs; Student Opinion; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Community Based Education; Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning; El Paso Community College; *Experiential Learning

ABSTRACT

El Paso Community College (Texas), a task force school in the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning project, is experimenting with a sponsored experiential learning system. An important requisite for a valid sponsored experiential learning program is an articulation agreement between El Paso Community based agencies and the college. The purpose of this research study was to measure the response of students, agency supervisors, and community college faculty involved in the experiential learning program concerning problems in communication and cooperation among all parties. A semi-structured interview questionnaire instrument was distributed to 15 members from each of the three components involved in the program. Responses were received and processed for all 45 subjects. The results of the survey strongly favored increased communication and cooperation between agency supervisors and faculty. Agency supervisors and faculty deviated in their degree of intensity toward how and to what extent articulation between the community based agencies and the community college could be achieved. Recommendations based on survey responses are included, and the survey instrument and a list of the community based agencies participating in the program are appended. (Author/AH)

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# A NEED FOR ARTICULATION: SPONSORED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING - EL PASO COMMUNITY BASED AGENCIES AND EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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El Paso Community College

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

APRIL 27, 1975

JC 750 313

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## INTRODUCTION

El Paso Community College is located in the western most tip of the state of Texas. The city of El Paso, Texas, has a population of 350,000 and the sister city of Juarez, Mexico, has a population of 450,000, which makes the greater El Paso area a diverse and growing metropolis. Until 1971, the El Paso area was served by only one institution of higher education; then in September of that year, El Paso Community College opened its doors to the El Paso community. Since that initial semester in 1971, serving 901 students to the Spring Semester of 1975, serving 8,500 students; El Paso Community College has become an integral part of the community. The El Paso area has a unique ethnic distribution composed of 58% Mexican American; 38% Anglo American; 3% Black American; 0.5% Oriental American; and 0.2% American Indian students.

Community college education in general, and El Paso Community College in particular, have made significant inroads in community oriented courses, programs, activities, and experiences. A local area of neglect where the gap should be bridged is the academic area, as it pertains to sponsored experiential learning. Articulation between El Paso community based agencies and El Paso Community College is a requisite for a valid sponsored experiential learning program.

El Paso Community College has identified as one of its institutional goals, the individualization of instruction. Individualized instruction as an institutional goal and the development of a competency based sponsored experiential learning system are closely related. Therefore, the focus and direction of individualized instruction and of a competency based sponsored experiential program is toward a non-traditional approach that allows the individual student to control and master the course objectives from his own point of view and situa-

tion. This approach or thrust also has implications for the general academic community college student.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

A major purpose of this study is to establish and implement a community based sponsored experiential program for community college students enrolled in social science courses. Another major purpose of this study is to encourage and enhance the development of a competency based sponsored experiential programs applicable to community college students in general and academic courses in particular. A final purpose of this study is to establish a permanent articulation agreement between El Paso Community College and El Paso community based agencies.

In addition, this study will also concentrate on other specific purposes or outcomes. One expected outcome of this study is to initiate a permanent dialogue between the community college faculty and the community based agencies. A second outcome would be to encourage recommendations, options, strategies, and criticisms from the community agencies, the college faculty, and the students. A third outcome would focus on the development of a joint academic curricula with input from the students, the community based agencies, and the community college faculty. A fourth outcome would extend the sponsored experiential learning system to the general academic area, the vocational-technical area, and the continuing education area. A fifth outcome, in keeping with the spirit of Edmund Gleazer's Project Focus: Goal Priorities for the 1970's, would be to enhance the direction and development of El Paso Community College toward a relevant comprehensive competency based performance oriented community college. Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., in "After the Boom--What Now for Community College?" states that the community colleges are in a new period of

evolution. This new period of evolution has brought some demands on post-secondary higher education in general, and community colleges in particular. The important question confronting community colleges in this period of evolution is to ask, "What does the community want?" Edmund Gleazer has identified four crucial areas of concentration: career development, individual development, family development, and institutional services. Gleazer also elaborates on the responsibilities of a community college that adheres to the community-based performance oriented approach. Moreover, in keeping with the spirit of community based philosophy, it is essential to shift current directions and priorities toward a strong emphasis on community needs.

Another important article that has reinforced the need for articulation between the community and the community college is Edmund J. Gleazer's, "Beyond the Open Door: The Open College." Two important questions are raised by Edmund J. Gleazer in this article: First, what are the priority areas of the community and how does the community college transfer the needs and inputs of the community into institutional objectives and activities? Second, how can the community college be more responsive to the needs and wants of the community from the standpoint of community based programs outside the traditional academic areas? In response to the aforementioned questions, the main thrust of this study will be to encourage involvement and participation by the community-based performance oriented community college.

Ervin Harlacher in his article, "What Does it Mean to be Community-Based," defines and identifies the national trend and direction of community-based performance oriented post-secondary education. Dr. Harlacher in his book, The Community Dimension of the Community College, has identified seven major directions essential toward the implementation of a comprehensive community-based college. Three of the seven directions are directly applicable to the thrust of

this study: First, increased concentration on community education for all of the community; second, increased emphasis on community college input and interaction; and third, increased cooperation and coordination between the community college and community-based agencies.

The Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning (C.A.E.L.) project, a joint project of the Educational Testing Service and selected college and universities across the nation, including El Paso Community College, have focused on current experiential learning practices in the non-traditional performance oriented area. The C.A.E.L. project's area of concentration has identified some important community college areas of neglect and non-participation. Specifically, these areas have been due to the lack of community based involvement in community college programs. The review of selected literature has substantiated the need for a concise study in the area of articulation between the El Paso community based agencies and El Paso Community College.

## PROCEDURES

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview questionnaire prescribed by Fred N. Kerlinger in his book, Foundations of Behavioral Research. The questionnaire was pre-tested by a sample population composed by faculty, students, and agency supervisors. The finalized questionnaire was then hand-carried and implemented (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was given to all El Paso Community College instructors (N=15), involved in the University Year for Action program. The questionnaire was also given to all agency supervisors (N=15), involved in the University Year for Action program (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was also given to a randomly selected student sample (N=15), involved in the University Year for Action program. The University Year for Action program is an innovative non-traditional program that

allows the individual student to work in a sponsored social service agency and students are also enrolled in college credit courses at El Paso Community College. The faculty members involved in this program are expected to develop individual student oriented performance objectives which relate to the student's job situation. The total number involved in this research study was forty-five participants.

## RESULTS

The data obtained from the semi-structured interview questionnaire was analyzed and computed into percentages and ranked on frequency of occurrence. Students, agency supervisors, and faculty responses to question one, two, and three were analyzed and computed into percentages (see Table 1). Students' response to questions one, two, and three in the questionnaire were overwhelming on the positive side, indicating a strong group consensus. One important explanation for the students positive direction to the first three questions could be their degree of involvement in the sponsored experiential program.

On the other hand, agency supervisors also responded unanimously to the question on sponsored experiential program goals and objectives (see Table 1). In the area of cooperation and communication, 53% of the agency supervisors felt that it was adequate. An important observation is appropriate: 47% of the agency supervisors felt that communication was inadequate and that this situation was not beneficial to the students' occupational-educational situation. In the area of meeting objectives in a sponsored experiential program; agency supervisors strongly felt that by not working together, meeting objectives of a sponsored experiential program would be difficult.

Faculty responses to the first three questions of the questionnaire were very significant (see Table 1). In the area of understanding sponsored experiential program's goals and objectives, only 60% responded positively. In the

area of communication and cooperation between faculty and agency supervisors, responses were overwhelmingly negative. In the area of meeting objectives in a sponsored experiential program, the faculty strongly felt that by not working together, that meeting the objectives of a sponsored experiential program would also be difficult. An important observation in regard to the question on working together to meet sponsored experiential program objectives; students, agency supervisors, and faculty responded significantly in favor of working together as a must for the sponsored experiential program to succeed. In order to enhance communication and cooperation among all parties involved, receptiveness to input from all involved persons indicated a willingness to work together. From the responses of the question on receptiveness to input, in most cases, the students, agency supervisors, and faculty were in favor of input from all parties involved (see Table 2). The two notable exceptions were the students' negative responses, 73% to input from agency supervisors (see Table 2). The other exception was faculty's negative response, 53% to input from other faculty members. However, overall receptiveness to input from students, agency supervisors, and faculty was significantly positive.

In the area of ranking major problems confronting the sponsored experiential program, students generally ranked as a major problem area: the need for more student, faculty communication and cooperation (see Table 3). Agency supervisors also identified significant problem areas. One important area was the need for more communication between faculty and students. Another important area was the need for increased communication between agency supervisors and faculty (see Table 3). Finally, the faculty also identified some major problem areas. One important problem area was lack of committment by the students to the academic component of the sponsored experiential approach. Another significant problem area was a need for more communication from all

parties involved in the sponsored experiential learning program (see Table 3). In general, the results indicated a strong desire by all parties involved to increase communication and cooperation for the success and committment to a sponsored experiential learning approach.

TABLE 1--STUDENTS, AGENCY SUPERVISORS, AND FACULTY RESPONSES--
A Need for Articulation: Community Based Agencies and Community College Faculty
(in percentages)

| Types of Questions | Students (S) Agency Supervisors (AS) Faculty (F) | Yes | No | No Opinion | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you feel that the goals and objectives of this sponsored experiential learning program are clear and understandable? | S | 93% | 7% | | 100% |
| | AS | 100 | | | 100 |
| | F | 60 | 40 | | 100 |
| Do you feel that cooperation and communication between agency supervisors and faculty is adequate? | S | 100 | | | 100 |
| | AS | 53 | 47 | | 100 |
| | F | 20 | 73 | 7% | 100 |
| Do you feel that if students, agency supervisors, and faculty do not work together, that meeting the objectives of a sponsored experiential learning program will be difficult? | S | 100 | | | 100 |
| | AS | 80 | 20 | | 100 |
| | F | 87 | 13 | | 100 |

TABLE 2--STUDENTS, AGENCY SUPERVISORS, AND FACULTY RESPONSES--
Receptiveness to Input from Parties Involved in
A Sponsored Experiential Learning Program

(in percentages)

| | Students (S) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| S | 73% | 27% |
| AS | 27 | 73 |
| F | 67 | 33 |

| | Agency Supervisors (AS) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| S | 60% | 40% |
| AS | 80 | 20 |
| F | 73 | 27 |

| | Faculty (F) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No |
| S | 93% | 7% |
| AS | 80 | 20 |
| F | 47 | 53 |

TABLE 3--STUDENTS, AGENCY SUPERVISORS, AND FACULTY RESPONSES

Major Problems Confronting the Sponsored Experiential Learning Program

(Rank order based on frequency)

| Students | Agency Supervisor | Faculty |
|---|---|---|
| 1. More communication between faculty and students in order to relate course objectives to the student's job situation. | 1. More communication between students and faculty. | 1. Lack of a commitment by students to the academic component of this experiential learning program. |
| 2. More communication between faculty and sponsored experiential program directors. | 2. Need to relate academic work to what the student is doing in the agency situation. | 2. Lack of student, agency supervisor and faculty communication and cooperation. |
| 3. Lack of adequate facilities to accommate student-faculty conferences. | 3. More communication between faculty and agency supervisor. | 3. A need to make this sponsored experiential program a part of the faculty's regular class load. |
| 4. More communication between agency supervisors and sponsored experiential program directors. | 4. A need for faculty to better prepare student for job situation. | 4. To familiarize the student with with their job situation sooner. |
| 5. More faculty awareness of a student's job setting and activities. | 5. More communication between program directors and agency supervisors. | 5. Closer screening of students into this sponsored experiential learning program. |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

A major purpose of this research study was to examine a need for articulation between El Paso community based agencies and El Paso Community College as it pertained to a sponsored experiential learning approach. Another major purpose of this study was to encourage and enhance the development of a sponsored experiential approach in the academic area for community college students. A final purpose was to establish and implement a community based sponsored experiential program for community college students enrolled in social science courses. It is important to note that the following recommendations are based on the responses to the semi-structured interview questionnaire and to consequent related verbal interactions between the researcher and the survey participants.

1. It is recommended that El Paso Community College initiate a permanent articulation agreement with community based agencies and to increase its sponsored experiential learning approach to include community based industry and businesses.
2. It is recommended that El Paso Community College faculty increase its communication and cooperation with community based agencies.
3. It is recommended that students, agency supervisors, and faculty work closer together in order to develop more meaningful learning alternatives and or strategies in the sponsored experiential area.
4. It is recommended that appropriate experiential courses be included in a faculty's classload or provide release time options so that interested faculty can provide instruction for sponsored experiential program students.
5. It is recommended that the sponsored experiential approach be properly developed and made applicable to the general academic area.

6. It is recommended that the social science area provide a sponsored experiential academic alternative approach for the purpose of meeting traditional course objectives.
7. It is recommended that the sponsored experiential program directors increase their communication and cooperation with the El Paso Community College faculty.
8. It is recommended that an inter-disciplinary approach to a sponsored experiential learning system be encouraged and developed.
9. It is recommended that the sponsored experiential learning approach be a viable vehicle toward individualization of instruction.
10. It is recommended that through the implementation of a college-wide sponsored experiential learning approach, that El Paso Community College become a competency based performance oriented community college.

The intent and purpose of these recommendations is to encourage involvement by El Paso Community College with the El Paso community. In order to make the objectives and goals of El Paso Community College attainable and realistic, El Paso Community College must become truly community based.

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

Roberto Reyes:

I feel that this societal factors practicum has allowed me to directly experience the importance of community college faculty involvement in the community. This research study also allowed me to interact with community based agencies and to see my role as a community college instructor from a community perspective instead of a college perspective. Participation in this research study has also been a practical exercise in articulation, cooperation, and communication with the community aspect of the community college.

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APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

6601 Dyer Street El Paso, Texas 79904

(915) 568-1277
President's Office
Office of Instruction

(915) 568-2276
Office of Student Services
Business Office

Dear Survey Participant:

Attached you will find a semi-structured interview questionnaire pertaining to the need for articulation between El Paso Community College and El Paso community based agencies.

Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Roberto Reyes

## RATIONALE

The University Year for Action program at El Paso Community College is an innovative attempt to provide the individual student with college credit courses while working in a community based agency. This type of occupational educational approach for the purpose of this questionnaire will be referred to as a sponsored experiential learning program.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Check appropriate responses.
2. If applicable, elaborate further where appropriate.

_____ Student

_____ Agency Supervisor

_____ Faculty

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you feel that the goals and objectives of this sponsored experiential learning program are clear and understandable?

   _____ YES — If yes, why?_____

   _____ NO — _____

   If no, why not?_____

   _____

2. Do you feel that cooperation and communication between agency supervisors and faculty is adequate?

   _____ YES — If yes, why?_____

   _____ NO — _____

   If no, why not?_____

   _____

3. Do you feel that if students, agency supervisors, and faculty do not work together, that meeting the objectives in a sponsored experiential learning program will be difficult?

   _____ YES — If yes, why?_____

   _____ NO — _____

   If no, why not?_____

   _____

4. From your point of view and as it pertains to your role in this sponsored experiential learning program, would you be receptive to input from:
   (Check where appropriate . . )

   _____ Agency Supervisor

   _____ Students

   _____ Faculty

5. If appropriate, identify <u>one</u>, <u>two</u>, or <u>three</u> major problem areas confronting this sponsored experiential learning program, and also list probable solutions to those problem areas.

   1. Problem area:_____

      _____

      Solution:_____

   2. Problem area:_____

      _____

      Solution:_____

   3. Problem area:_____

      _____

      Solution:_____

## APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY BASED AGENCIES

El Paso Community College

6601 Dyer Street

El Paso, Texas 79904

(915) 568-1277
President's Office
Office of Instruction

(915) 568-2276
Office of Student Services
Business Office

## EL PASO COMMUNITY BASED AGENCIES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Aliviane | 7358 Alameda (15) |
| 2. | County Court at Law | City-County Bldg. (01) |
| 3. | Houchden Community Center | 199 E. Fifth Ave. (01) |
| 4. | West Texas Adult Probation | P. O. Box 86 (41) |
| 5. | Emmanuel Community Center | 1201 Magoffin Ave. (01) |
| 6. | U.S. Federal Probation | U.S. Federal Court House Room 242 (01) |
| 7. | Rio Grande Girl Scouts | 3212 E. Yandell (03) |
| 8. | Texas Rehabilitation | 5160 El Paso Dr. (05) |
| 9. | United Way | 2112 Murchison (23) |
| 10. | SER-Trinity OIC | 730 Yandell (02) |
| 11. | Child Guidance | 1501 N. Mesa (02) |
| 12. | Legal Aide | 109 N. Oregon (01) |
| 13. | Human Development & Resources | 6700 Delta (05) |
| 14. | Sunshine Day Care | 510 S. Oregon (01) |
| 15. | Juvenile Detention | 333 Cargill |

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